

The story of Edmund Wollis and Jane Mackie

In the mid-1800's there was a massive influx of people from the Lincolnshire, England area to Canada and America. Some moved for religious reasons; some immigrated for the possibility of opportunity, the opportunity of a better life. Those who came were risking everything for this chance. The Woolliss family was just one Lincolnshire family that I was related to that went through this very trying time.

The Woolliss family is connected to the Warren family tree through Hannah Woolliss, the daughter of John Woolis and Ann Robinson. Hannah married William Warren Sn. in England, on November 22, 1848. Hannah Woolliss (the name shown on her record of marriage) came to Canada in 1852 with her husband William Sn. and two small children, William Jr, and David Warren.

Hannah's father, John Woolis, was the son of Francis and Eleanor Wallis (Woolliss). John died at the age of 45, on August 10 in 1829, when Hannah was very young; he passed away when she and her twin sister Elizabeth were three years old. As is usually the case with most small children who lose a parent early, they probably had very little remembrance of their father.

John Woolis (note the spelling on his headstone on the next page) was buried in England in St. Helen's Cemetery, Barnoldby-Le-Beck, Grimsby, Lincolnshire. The picture shown above is the actual church in Barnoldby le Beck, Grimsby where he is buried. The stone still stands today in the graveyard and is legible. His grave site was also used for the remains of one son George, and his daughter Elizabeth.



On Jan 27th, 1823, in Barnold-Le-Beck, Grimsby, England, a baby boy was born to John Woolliss and Anne (Robinson) Woolliss. They named this boy Edmund. This is his story.

Edmund would be the fourth son that Anna gave to John; he was also the last boy they would have. Later, Anna would have a second set of twins, both girls. Edmund was old enough to remember his father as John would pass away in 1929 when Edmund was only six years old. His younger sisters were only three at that time. Edmund would eventually be the first Woolliss to come to Canada in search of a better life. He spelt

his surname differently (Wollis) than his father (Woolis) and younger sister Hannah (Woolliss) or his older brother Robert (Woolis). The differences in the names are largely the result of relating the name they knew how to pronounce to a literate person who wrote it down however they felt it must be spelt.

Edmund was old enough to also remember some troubling events that most likely remained with him for his lifetime. Both his parents came from English serf families and were illiterate. Schooling was not available to them, although there was a chance it was available to Edmund. He may have had access to the Sunday School through the church



that taught the children of the poor to read the bible. There would have also been what was called the "ragged schools". He may have attended these for a while. I was hesitant to say that Edmund was illiterate as I had no evidence to this. In fact, he is shown holding what may well be a newspaper in the only photo I have of him. Perhaps, I thought, he could read; or perhaps he was just posing with it. The family was not well off in England and when his father died things became very difficult for the family. Anna was left with six children to support and no income to do it with. Schooling may have ranked very low on the priority list. But somehow, Edmund learned to read and write. In the 1871 Canada Census, they asked the question "how many people over 20 yrs are unable to read?" There is no indication that Edmund or Jane were unable to read. Incidentally, it appears that Edmund was the first in the family to reach this milestone.

Edmund's older brothers George and George's twin brother John Jr. (16 yrs old) and Edmund's brother Robert all helped to provide support for the family. Despite their best efforts all this support was still not good enough. Times were very hard and the family had begun to fracture. John Jr. married in 1836 and took on the responsibility of a family of his own. His need to support a wife reduced the family income quite a bit and

around 1836, Edmund's mother and his two younger sisters Elizabeth and Hannah entered the workhouse as a result of the tough economic times. There is no record of Edmund ever spending time in the workhouse. It is also unknown if George and Robert supported young Edmund during this time but it is highly probable either case could have existed. Edmund was now 15 and it is also very likely that he could have been working by this time.

Edmund's younger sister Elizabeth, a twin to his sister Hannah, died when she became ill in the workhouse in 1938. Elizabeth was buried with her father John Woolis Sn. in St Helen's church graveyard. Then, just two years later, Edmund's older brother George passed away at the age of 27 in 1840; Edmund was seventeen. George also was buried with his father John. The stone still stands there today in St. Helen's Cemetery, Barnoldby le Beck, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, England and I have provided this copy of it. There exists no family stories of this tragic time in the lives of the Wooliss family. Perhaps people would rather not speak about what was most likely the worst times of their lives. The record that led to the workhouse is shown below.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE				GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON				
				Application Number..... 4469				
1840. Marriage solemnized <u>at the Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish</u> of <u>Barnoldby le Beck</u> in the County of <u>Lincoln</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
2	August 11 1840	John Brewster	4 full age	Widower	Labourer	at Waltham	Jonathan Brewster	Labourer
		Ann Woolis	31 full age	Widow	Residing in a poor house	at Barnoldby le Beck	Thomas Robins	Labourer
Married in the <u>Parish Church of Barnoldby le Beck</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by me, <u>Matthew Ellis</u> <u>Marshall</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		{ The X of John Brewster The X of Ann Woolis }		in the Presence of us,		{ Matthew Ellis Joseph Lill }		
CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of..... <u>Leicester</u> Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the <u>5th</u> day of <u>August</u> 19 <u>74</u>								
MX 396671								
This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 65 of the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.								
CAUTION:—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution.								

So in 1840, Edmund's mother, Anna remarried to John Brewster, a farm labourer. The record that we have of John and Anna Brewster in the 1841 English Census shows Hannah living with them at the age of twelve. Life for them had much improved. They

were no longer in the workhouse. Hannah was working as a maid. The above record shows that John Brewster and Anna were both illiterate and so job prospects were limited for them. John Brewster was already working as a farm labourer when they married.

Edmund, however, is not shown as living with John and Anna Brewster in the 1841 census. We have been unable to locate him in England in 1841, what so ever. Sometime in 1844, driven by the desire to find something better, Edmund Wollis, by now aged twenty one, emigrated to North America to make a new life for himself. Where he found the funds to emigrate we cannot confirm. Once in Canada, he took jobs working on farms near Toronto until he could save enough to purchase a homestead in the Winterbourne area.

The following excerpt can be found about Edmund Wollis in the history book *"The Early History of Elora and Vicinity"* by John R. Connon. This book was a compilation of newspaper articles published in *The Elora Express* and written by John Connon from 1906-1909, The following article was extracted from it. Editorial corrections and comments are shown in bold type.

"Edmund Wollis was born at Barnoldby-le-Beck, Lincolnshire, England on January 27th, 1823. In the year 1844, he came to Canada and for about two years worked in the townships of Darlington and Pickering. One morning, in the springtime of 1846, he landed in Elora and then walked to Winterbourne to see the land in Waterloo County, **(Waterloo County did not actually exist as a county until 1853 although it was referred to as Waterloo County)** of which he had heard. The river road **(alongside the Grand River)** through the long woods was only chopped out to about half its proper width, the logs forming the corduroy road were floating about in the many swamps, while, from the James Ross farm at the "Big Bend" to the "Big Ridge", a distance of more than three miles was without a clearing on either side of the road. Mr. Wollis soon took up his farm on the east side of the river road, at the "little ridge". To the south of him was Thomas Adsett's farm, while across from Adsett, on the west, was Richard Morelli and opposite to Mr. Wollis was, a little later, Stephan Webster. Each of these made clearings on the corners of their farms adjoining, so that as Mr. Wollis says, "they soon let the daylight in".

Mr. Wollis was married in August of 1855, to Jane Mackie, whose parents had come to Winterbourne, from Aberdeenshire, Scotland in October of 1837. **(Jane's parents were George Mackie and Margaret Fordyce. They were both born in Scotland and came to Canada with their children in 1838.)**

Of their family:

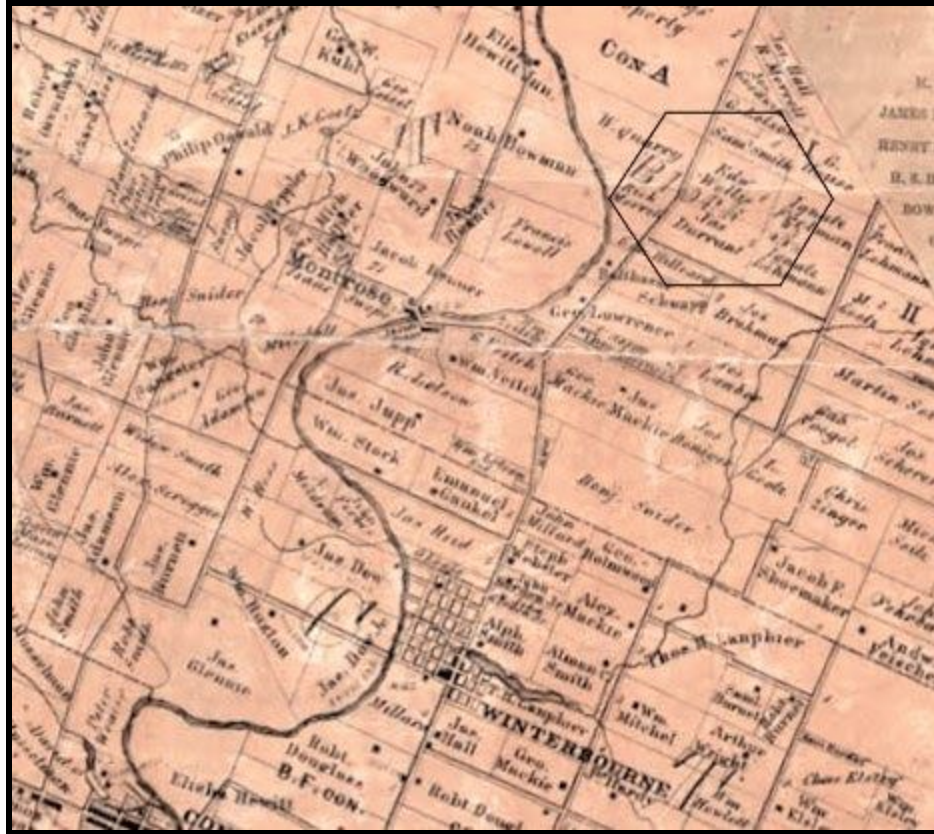
Margaret Wollis married John Elsley (1877) and lived near Mt. Forest;
Mary Wollis died in September of 1900,
George Wollis married Esther Gillies (1896), near Mt Forest;
Ann Wollis married Sam Burnett (1885),
Edmund Wollis married Alice Kirkness (1894),
John Wollis married Ellen Hamilton (1895),
Elizabeth Wollis married William Glennie (1887), lives in Eramosa,
Jane Wollis married John Glennie (1891)
and Sarah Wollis, living with her parents, who a few years ago, retired and now live in their comfortable home on the Elora and Salem road."

Edmund was the first of his family to immigrate to North America. By the time of the 1851 Agricultural Census of Waterloo, Edmund was more successful then he had ever been. The Census shows he had 4 acres seeded with oats and 150 bushels stockpiled. He also had 30 bushels of potatoes and 60 bushels of turnips. His little 100 acre farm also had 10 acres under cultivation at the time. He must have felt that things had very much improved over the situation he had left in England.

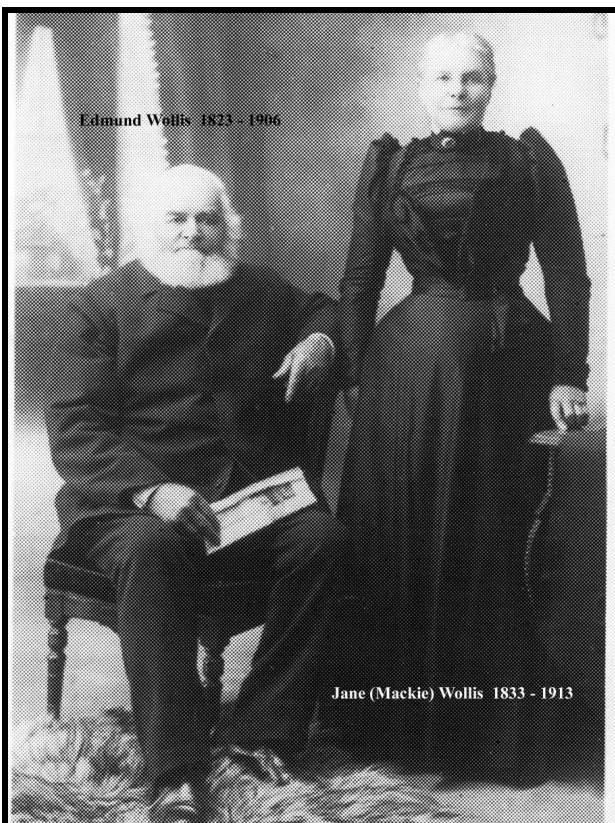
Curiously, the following year, in 1852, his sister Hannah moved to Matilda, Ontario with her husband William Warren and two small children. It is unknown if they had any contact with each other at all but it would not have been unusual for immigrants to encourage their family to move if the opportunity was there. Following the history of William and Hannah Warren, there is no mention of Hannah having a family member living in Canada. Hannah and Edmund's older brother, Robert Woolis also moved to America to Pennsylvania and eventually on to Iowa in 1859. John Woolis Jr and his wife and family were the only remaining family members living in England. He owned land and food was not an issue.

Edmund and Robert must have stayed in some type of contact with each other. It was not until much later, in about 1883, that Albert Woolis (Robert Woolis' youngest son) went to Canada from Cambria, Iowa to visit Edmund's family. He had just been married. This distance of approximately 800 miles was probably done by train as they were now available by this time. Both his uncle Edmund and his aunt Jane were alive at the time. Albert collected autographs as keepsakes from his many cousins and relatives.

The Canadian Plat map from 1861 shown below has Edm Wollis' property shown in the upper right hand quadrant of the map. To assist you in locating the property it is within the polygon placed over the map.



Waterloo County 1861



Edmund Wollis 1823 - 1906

Jane (Mackie) Wollis 1833 - 1913

Just outside this area and south down the road closer to Winterbourne, is the Geo. Mackie farm. The Mackie family came to Canada in 1838. Sadly, this date is established by the death of their child Janet, born in Scotland and who was buried at sea as a baby, the year of their crossing. The Mackie family left for Canada with seven children and arrived with six. Alexander, their son, died in Scotland at six years old, prior to their crossing the Atlantic. Jane Mackie, herself was five years old when they crossed the ocean. It must have seemed a long and dreary time for the young girl. Jane would be twenty two years old when she married Edmund Wollis, ten years her senior in 1855.

Edmund and Jane Wollis had a large family. They were:

Margaret Wollis (b. 6/6/1856 - d.05/12/1923)

Mary Wollis (b. 02/1858 - d. 09/06/1900)

George Wollis (b.07/31/1859 - d. 10/05/1923)

Ann Wollis (b. 10/14/1861- d. 08/03/1936)

Edmund Wollis (b. 02/1864 -d. 01/09/1938)

Elizabeth Wollis (b. 1866- d. 04/17/1951)

John Wollis (b. 09/19/1868- d. 10/1956)

Jane Wollis (b. 02/21/1871- d. 03/27/1953)

Sarah Wollis (b.11/14/1873- d. 09/11/1957)

Edmund Wollis lived to be eighty three years old and died in 1906. His spouse, Jane Mackie Wollis was eighty years old when she passed away in 1913. They are buried together in Elora Cemetery, Wellington, Ontario.



The children of Edmund Wollis and Jane Mackie

The Elsley Family

Margaret Wollis was the first child of Edmund and Jane Wollis. Margaret married John Elsley, a farmer in the Mount Pleasant area, in July of 1877. John was the son of William and Ann Elsley. John and Margaret farmed in the Mount Pleasant area and had twelve children. They were:

- 1) Mary Jane Elsley (b. May 9, 1878-d.Feb 18 1971) Mary married Nelson Richardson.They had three children, Morris, Eva and Nelson. Mary died in New Jersey, USA.
- 2) James Elsley (b. 1879-d.1879)
- 3) Florence Ann Elsley (b, 09/03/1880 - d. 06/16/1968) married Ralph Waldo Young in 1913. Florence and Ralph moved from Ontario to Ohio. They had one child, Margaret Beatrice Young. Margaret died in Canton, Stark, Ohio in 2012, two years after her husband Leslie Decius Arnold.
- 4) William Edmund Elsley (b. Sept 22, 1883 - d. 1967) He married Ethel Pearl Stevenson in 1917. It is currently unknown if they had children.
- 5) Alice Maude Elsley (b. Dec 11,1885 - d. Dec, 1950) Alice married Frederick Ross on Sept 11, 1911. They lived in Egremont, Ontario and had four children, Evelyn, Beatrice, Arthur and Lillian. Alice and Fred are buried in Egremont.
- 6) Laura Elsley (b. Dec 27, 1886-d. Sept 16, 1917) Laura died of typhoid fever and is buried in a shared grave with her parents and two other siblings
- 7) John W. Elsley(b. Sept/19/1868-Oct/1956) John married Doris (Champion) Brown in 1929. Doris was divorced from her first husband in 1928. John worked as a grocer. John and Doris had two children: Harold born in 1931, and Donald born in 1933.
- 8) Emma Gertrude Lillian Elsley (b. Apr 29, 1892- d. May 25, 1968) Went by Lillian and never married, she is buried in a common grave with her sister Ida and Ida's husband, Charles Steele.

9) Sarah Beatrice Elsley (b. 1894-d. 1916) Sarah is buried in a shared grave with her parents and two other siblings.

10) Ida Margaret Elsley(b. Mar 27, 1897-d. May 6, 1990) Married Charles Steele.They had one child Robert Frank Steele. Robert died shortly after birth from a brain injury.

11) Charles Albert Elsley (1899-1899) Charles died as an infant and shares a grave with his parents and two other siblings.

12) Morris George Elsley-(b. Feb 2, 1902-d. 1959) Morris was an auto mechanic. He married Jessie Hartford and they had one son James Elsley.

Mary Wollis, Edmund and Jane Wollis' second daughter, never married. She lived with her parents until her death in 1900 at the age of 42 from cancer of the throat.

George Wollis (b. July 31, 1859- d. Oct 5, 1926) was Edmund and Jane Wollis' oldest boy. Named after Edmund's brother who died in England in 1840, he married Esther Gillies in 1896. He had a farm in Egremont Township. Esther was the daughter of Charles Gillies and Margaret Robb. George and Esther had two children together: Robert Edmund Wollis (b. 1896- d. 1960) and Margaret Jane Wollis (b. 1901-d. 1990)

Ann Wollis, Edmund and Jane's third daughter named after Edmund's mother, married Samuel Burnett, in Woolwich, in 1885. Samuel was the son of Samuel Burnett Sn. and Margaret Gerries. Anna and Sam lived in Listowel, Ontario. They had six children: Norma Jane Burnett (b. 1886 - d. 1934), Mary Evaline Burnett (b. 1888-d. 1954), Anna Gertrude Olive Burnett (b. 1891-d. 1945), Robert Percival Burnett (b. 1897-d.1973), and finally, Edmund Samuel Burnett (b. 1907-d. 1988)

Edmund Wollis (b. 1884- d. 1938) was Edmund and Jane's second son. Edmund married Alice Kirkness in 1894. They had five children, all boys, together. Alice passed away in 1909. Edmund remarried to Frances Bowins in 1911. They had no children together and

divorced in 1912. Edmund remarried to Elizabeth Gillin in 1913. They also had no children of record.

The six children of Edmund and Alice Kirkness are as follows: Oswald Edmund Wollis (b. 1897-d. 1965), Wilburt Roy Wollis (b. 1898-d. 1983), Albert Elmer Wollis (b. 1900-d. 1979), Robert Earl Wollis (b. 1901-d. 1982), and finally John Elgin Wollis (b. 1904-d. 1974)

Elizabeth Wollis (b. 1866- d. 1951), Edmund and Jane's fourth daughter was named after Edmund's sister that died in 1838 in England. She married William Glennie in 1887. They had three children: Jennie Glennie (b. 1888- d. 1978), Edmund Russel Glennie (b. 1892 -d. 1990), and William Erie Glennie (b.1896-d.1975)

John Wollis, named after his grandfather, married Ellen Hamilton in 1895. They had three children: Thomas Edmund Carl Wollis (b. 1896- d. 1986), Vera Ellen Wollis (b. 1898-d. 1985), and John Edward Lorne Wollis (b. 1903-d.1973).

Jane Wollis married John Glennie in 1891. John was the son of George Glennie and Ann Adamson. They farmed by Sarnia, Ontario. Jane passed away in 1953. They had four children: John Glennie (b. 1892-d. ?), Jennie Beatrice Glennie (b. 1894- d. 1952), Stuart George Glennie (b. 1898- d. 1984) and John Harold Glennie (b.1903-d. 1965).

Sarah Wollis also never married (that we have a record of). After her sister Mary died Sarah moved into the house with her parents. We find her there living with her elderly mother in the 1911 census. She died in 1957.